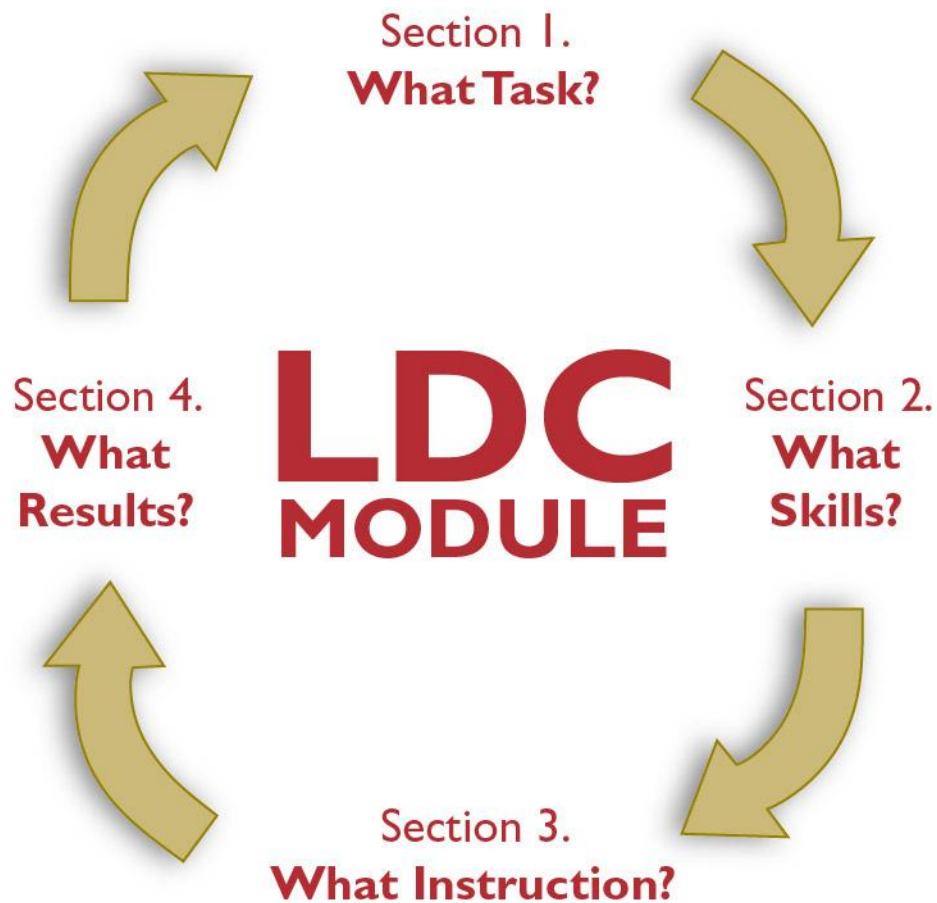


THE LITERACY DESIGN COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK

A Support Document for LDC Leaders



This document establishes the technical specifications for the LDC Framework. The audience is current LDC project leaders and potential LDC partners interested in designing their own LDC project. Other field-friendly tools and training materials will be built out based on this framework.

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Introduction

“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”
Albert Einstein

A small team of expert practitioners came together to try to solve a big problem – the lack of focus on teaching high-level literacy skills in our nation’s secondary schools. Because of the inconsistent attention to literacy, most students graduate from high school unprepared for the academic reading and writing demands of college and high-performing workplaces. This small design team was the beginning of the Literacy Design Collaborative [LDC], a larger initiative supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. LDC now involves an expanding set of classroom, district, state and service providers with the will to meet the challenge of expecting high levels of secondary literacy, head-on.

Thanks to the effort of the LDC Design Team and literacy experts from across the Collaborative, we now have an LDC Framework that supports partners in making the Common Core State Standards come alive. The design of LDC is based on the mandates of the core standards that place the responsibility for teaching literacy within the core subjects of English/language arts, social studies and science. Instead of layering literacy on top, LDC positions it as the foundation, providing ways for teachers to present content through strategies that ensure students are taught literacy skills they will need in the future. The LDC Framework is linked to the critical thinking and high skill demands of the core standards such as making comparisons, developing arguments or using multiple sources for reports.

The LDC Framework is only the first step after adoption of the core standards. The related tasks, resources and tools need to be tested in classrooms, elaborated upon by teachers and enveloped within a large group of curriculum and technological resources to help shape it for wider and wider use.

This is the role of the Literacy Design Collaborative partners. Teachers and curriculum specialists in an expanding group of states and districts, as well as practitioners involved in national organizations such as the National Writing Project, Paideia at the University of North Carolina and others, are piloting the LDC model. A number of other partners will continue to be added, and researchers are involved in studying this work and providing ongoing feedback.

Together, they are working on an old problem in new ways.

The Literacy Design Collaborative Framework

The Common Core State Standards [CCSS] provide an opportunity to think and act more clearly on what we expect students to know and be able to do so that their high school diploma has meaning. The diploma must, in fact, affirm that they are ready for college and/or career pathways. Currently, there is not a specific strategy to prepare students for literacy demands in the post-secondary world—one in which they must read multiple, complex and diverse texts; understand and form opinions about them; and write adeptly in different forms. No single subject or teacher can teach all of this (nor can students learn these skills on their own), so CCSS establishes literacy standards for core subjects, firmly distributing responsibility beyond English/language arts (ELA). The Literacy Design Collaborative Framework shows how the standards can then be put into practice.

Why Common Core State Standards?

For far too many high school students in the United States, there is a significant gap between their reading and writing skills and what will be demanded of them by college-level courses, career pathways and global competition. We know this because of the high percentage of students taking remedial reading and writing courses in post-secondary institutions – non-credit-bearing work they are required to pass before they are allowed to enter “real” college courses. We only need to look at the low college completion rates for traditionally under-served students to realize our huge failure. We also recognize a problem in the difference between the complexity level of the texts provided to most high school students and the complexity level of required reading in most college courses.¹ The mostly static results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress and rigorous international assessments tell us how far behind most of our students are in reaching basic levels of proficiency in academic subjects.

The CCSS give educators a way to address this gap by providing clear, explicit reading, writing, speaking/listening, and language standards in the core content areas. As outlined in the document developed by the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers and other influential groups:

The Standards set requirements not only for English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects....The Common Core literacy standards for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers of ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects using their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields. (Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects, 2010).

Why the LDC Framework?

Currently, literacy is used in secondary classrooms, but it is not taught in a systematic way. Prior attempts to teach secondary literacy focused on the strategy of reading and writing across the curriculum. In this design, educators first laid out course content, then attempted to layer literacy strategies on top of content, all too often in a haphazard way.

The Literacy Design Collaborative Framework flips this approach on its head, laying out the literacy design first and then adding content on top of a solid literacy foundation based on the CCSS. The LDC system merges literacy with content as a “both-and” strategy, supporting coherence in both systems rather than just one. The goal is to establish an aligned system for teaching college-ready literacy within core disciplines, a system that will work in grades 6-12, or up to the college-ready cut point. As a result, students will have more time and a deeper intensity in literacy practices than they now generally experience.

What is the LDC Framework?

The LDC Framework is a totally new way of thinking about and preparing all students to have the literacy skills they need to be college/career ready. It is not a program. It is not a random selection of curriculum ideas. It is a *literacy framework* that connects common core standards with secondary ELA, social studies and science classrooms. It drives explicit literacy instruction, with local decisions – by teachers, schools, districts and states– determining how the

¹ The average estimate for text complexity in college and career is 1300 Lexile measures. Average text complexity for 12th grade is 1130 Lexile measures. (MetaMetrics, 2010)

framework will be used and the content that goes into it. The framework is a way for those decisions to link assignments and assessments to the college- and career-ready standards.

There are three main components to the LDC system: tasks, modules, and courses:

1. **Tasks** are the beginning point for the LDC strategy. Literacy tasks are a way to translate the common core literacy standards into what we ask students to do and how we know they can do it. In a sense, tasks bring the standards into “action” in the classroom. To support practitioners in creating strong literacy tasks for students, LDC provides a prototype set of template tasks that connect the experiences of reading, writing, and thinking as established by the CCSS. Practitioners use the task templates to create “teaching tasks”—extended literacy assignments that are taught over several weeks—as well as short classroom-level literacy assessments that students do independently in a day or two. This prototype set can be found in The LDC Task Collection document. The template tasks in this set include fill-in-the-blank prompts that have the literacy standards “hardwired” into them, with the flexibility for practitioners to add content, including reading texts (type and level), writing products (type and level) and topics and themes within a subject area. The template tasks include a set of rubrics and eventually will include student work samples to support the rubrics. *This particular set of template tasks is designed to launch a larger conversation about a task bank with other purpose-specific task sets to be built by other partners.*
2. **Modules** add literacy instruction to teaching tasks, helping to ensure the reading, writing, and thinking skills students need to complete the task are intentionally taught. They support practitioners in developing content-linked literacy instruction—approximately 2-4 weeks—focused on a single “teaching task” developed from an LDC template task. The LDC module guides practitioners in specifying the literacy skills students must develop to succeed on the task; outlining instructional strategies to help students develop those skills; and designing short classroom pre/post assessments using the same template task to assess independent work. LDC partners are working to develop a collection of “template modules” with a variety of instructional strategies built and ready to go. These module templates are flexible in that developers can choose different styles of reading and writing instructional strategies, from traditional to highly non-traditional. Practitioners can choose to use the template module they select “as is,” can adjust it, or can create their own template module “from scratch.” A set of module specifications guides designers in meeting the requirements of the framework, while leaving much freedom of choice. This required organizational structure allows module templates, as well as fully developed modules, to be easily shared from school to school and state to state.
3. **Units, Module Combinations and Courses** grounded in college-preparatory literacy instruction are another important possibility of the LDC system. Modules can stand alone, but they are much more powerful when used as part of a larger instructional design. They can be used as building blocks to create new courses and as options inserted into existing courses. Modules can also be linked together to create student learning experiences that cut across disciplines, courses and/or even across years. The Foundation is working with EPIC to create a standardized format for syllabus development, including technology supports, to help practitioners create literacy-saturated courses that can easily be shared with colleagues.

What is the underlying strategy of the LDC Framework?

The LDC framework is built on a set of core principles:

1. **Aligns with common core.**

“The new standards provide a platform for innovation, a structure that can support creative strategies for teaching core content in math and literacy.” (Vicki Phillips, Carina Wong, Phi Delta Kappan, February 2010).

What we mean: The LDC framework is a way to put “legs” on the common core, to translate them into classroom practice and student experiences.

What you will see: A prototype set of template tasks built off of the requirements of the common core, outlining reading and writing demands for teachers to teach and students to do in core subject classrooms. Other template task collections will follow.

2. Distributes responsibility for reading and writing.

“The Standards insist that instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language be a shared responsibility within the school.” (Common Core State Standards, 2010)

What we mean: The LDC framework embeds the CCSS approach in that “the grades 6–12 standards are divided into two sections, one for ELA and the other for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. This division reflects the unique, time-honored place of ELA teachers in developing students’ literacy skills while at the same time recognizing that teachers in other areas must have a role in this development as well.” (Common Core State Standards, 2010)

What you will see: The LDC system of tasks, modules, and courses that supports practitioners from different content areas. With template tasks and modules establishing a common literacy foundation, teachers can work across grades, disciplines, and even district/state lines to teach students specific skills and analyze resulting student work. These open templates allow practitioners to add content from their disciplines, to select particular texts and to set writing demands that fit specific content areas. This framework also lends itself to creating common instructional strategies that can be applied to different content areas, giving schools and districts instructional “anchors” to use across disciplines.

3. Makes tasks central.

“The real accountability system is in the tasks that students are asked to do....” [T]he task predicts performance. What determines what students know and are able to do is not what the curriculum says they are supposed to do, nor even what the teacher thinks he or she is asking students to do. What predicts performance is what students are actually doing.” (Richard Elmore, City et al., 2009)

What we mean: Tasks set clear goals. They are the translation of the common core into the language of teaching, learning, and assessment. They are “standards in action.” Tasks can be used as assignments (taught or “coached” student work) or assessments (independent work with no teacher intervention).

What you will see: LDC templates that establish rigorous demands for thinking based on the common core standards. (See Appendix B for text complexity targets, for example.)

4. Connects reading and writing instruction.

“One often-overlooked tool for improving students’ reading, as well as their learning from text, is writing.” (Writing to Read, Graham & Hebert, 2010)

What we mean: As Graham and Herbert explain, “Reading and writing are functional skills that can be combined for specific goals such as learning new ideas presented in a text. Also, reading and writing are connected because they draw upon common knowledge and cognitive processes. Improving skills in one should improve skills in the other.” (Writing to Read, 2010)

What you will see: Template tasks that connect reading and writing instruction.

5. Uses back-mapping.

“Standards-based instruction targets the quality of performance we want from students. With the quality of the performance expected of students clearly in mind, teachers plan and conduct lessons aimed at teaching students how to achieve these specific characteristics.” (The Standards-Based Instructional Process, WestEd 2002)

What we mean: LDC template tasks are based on multiple standards. When content is added to create teaching tasks, overall targets for teaching and learning are set. The next step is to identify the specific literacy skills students need to acquire if they are to succeed on this larger task, or “back mapping” from the larger task. These skills should then be deliberately taught.

What you will see: A skills chart within each prototype module template that specifies student skills, clusters them into categories, and defines each skill as “the ability to...” so expectations are clear. You will also see a

“mini-task” that drives instruction for each skill. Practitioners are able to use the provided skills charts, adapt them, or create their own.

6. Fosters a responsive system.

“Responsive secondary teachers respond to students as individuals with unique needs.” (The Productive High School, 2001)

What we mean: The LDC system allows teachers to adjust their instruction. They can use the system to “spiral” the instruction of literacy skills and content in a proactive approach or to “scaffold” in reaction to the formative information they gather on student performance. This allows teachers to provide the right level of work at the right time for classes, groups of students or individual students to learn and progress to more difficult levels.

What you will see: Practitioners can adjust the difficulty of template tasks through the selection of text, content and student product. They can also select student skills and adjust instruction by using modules, alone or in combination, to move students to success on LDC tasks.

7. Encourages local choice.

“Because states will be working from the same core, we can create broad-based sharing of what works but, at the same time, provide local flexibility to decide how best to teach the core.” (Vicki Phillips, Carina Wong, Phi Delta Kappan, 2010)

“By emphasizing required achievements,” the CCSS document explains, “the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed. Thus, the Standards do not mandate such things as a particular writing process or the full range of meta-cognitive strategies that students may need to monitor and direct their thinking and learning. Teachers are thus free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards.” (*Common Core State Standards*, 2010)

What we mean: With a balanced focus on results as well as means, the LDC strategy embodies the philosophy of the CCS by aligning with what students should know and be able to do but not dictating a specific curriculum or instructional program. Those choices are the province of teachers, schools, districts and states.

What you will see: Template tasks that allow practitioners to control what students read, write and the content they study. While template modules share a common framework, they also encourage choice by allowing for a wide range of instructional approaches.

8. Strives to be teacher-friendly.

“The sheer magnitude of the teaching task is immense.” (Judith W. Little, cited in The Productive High School, 2001)

What we mean: If teachers, schools, districts, and states are to succeed at teaching students to meet proficiency on the core standards, they need solutions that are *doable*. Elegant solutions save time; they do not add to the already heavy daily work of teaching. Not only do educators deserve such tools, their expertise should be used to design and test them.

What you will see: Template tasks that save practitioners time in constructing quality tasks, along with template modules that have examples of instructional strategies. While the process of designing modules to teach the tasks initially requires time, well-crafted modules can be reused and shared, saving time for the practitioner who designed it and those who are adopting or adapting it. The common features of the modules also can provide feedback about different students in different contexts to help teachers determine their instructional strategies and organize their work.

The following pages—organized around template tasks, template modules and courses—provide detailed information about how the LDC Framework supports practitioners in putting these principles into practice.

LDC Template Tasks

LDC tasks translate the common core literacy standards into what we ask students to do and how we know they can do it. They take the standards from the page into action in the classroom.

What are “template tasks”?

Template tasks are fill-in-the-blank “shells” built off of the CCSS. They primarily are used to create high-quality student assignments that develop reading and writing skills in the context of learning science, history, literature or some other element of the middle or high school curriculum. Practitioners adapt template tasks for use in specific classes by filling in the kinds of texts to be read, writing to be produced and content to be addressed. Template tasks can also be used to create shorter classroom assessments that complement larger assignments.

LDC has created a prototype set of template tasks that connect the experiences of reading, writing, and thinking as established by the CCSS. This initial collection focuses on argumentation, informational/explanatory and narrative writing in response to reading single or multiple texts. These template tasks can be found in the LDC Template Task Collection document. *Other template task collections will become available as a variety of partners build them.*

Each LDC template task includes the following components:

- *Template Prompt.* Charges students with completing a product using and developing their reading and writing skills. The template prompt is a shell statement that allows practitioners to fill-in-the-blanks with their own content including reading texts (type and level), writing products (type and level), and topics and themes within their subject area.
- *Generic Scoring Rubric.* Clarifies expectations and describes and connects the demands and qualities established by the common core standards with the student product.
- *Student work.* Provides evidence of learning progress and contributes to thinking about benchmarks for what we expect from students across larger systems such as districts and states. (To be added because the tasks must be taught in order to generate student work samples and calibrate expectations).

Template tasks require students to:

1. *Read texts* as specified by the common core standards;
2. *Write products* as specified by the common core standards; and
3. *Apply common core literacy standards to content* with a focus on ELA, social studies, and/or science.

The LDC prototype collection has two types of template tasks:

1. “Essential question”

[Insert essential question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write an _____ (essay or substitute) that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text(s). **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

2. “After researching”

After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a report (or substitute) that defines and explains _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). **L2** What implications can you draw?

The initial LDC strategy was to develop a focused set of 6-12 template tasks that LDC partners can use in a wide variety of ways—across grades, content areas or courses. Practitioners and partners with expertise in teaching literacy skills are using and vetting this initial set of template tasks. The intent is to create a focused set of high-quality tasks rather than to create a massive number of template tasks. Other partners will develop new template task collections over time, extending the options for practitioners well beyond the broadly applicable prototype collection.

What are “teaching tasks”?

Teaching tasks are extended classroom assignments that result from building out an LDC template task—assignments that a teacher will teach. They are designed to prepare students to succeed on common core assessments as well as on the demanding assignments they will face in college. They are the focus of the LDC template task strategy. Taught over a 2-4 week period, the teaching task establishes demands for students that result in their completion of a product that can be scored. The scoring system allows practitioners to analyze student learning and make instructional decisions.

Examples of teaching tasks created from an essential question template task:

[Insert essential question] After reading _____ (literature or informational texts), write an _____ (essay or substitute) that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text(s). **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

- *ELA teaching task:* Would you recommend *A Wrinkle in Time* to a middle school reader? After reading this science fiction novel, write a review that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text.
- *Social studies teaching task:* How did the political views of the signers of the Constitution impact the American political system? After reading *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, write a report that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text.
- *Science teaching task:* Does genetic testing have the potential to significantly impact how we treat disease? After reading scientific sources, write a report that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the texts. **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

Examples of teaching tasks created from an “after researching” template task:

After researching _____ (informational texts) on _____ (content), write a report (or substitute) that defines and explains _____ (content). Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). **L2** What implications can you draw?

- *ELA teaching task:* After researching articles on modernism in American literature, write a report that defines and explains “modernism.” Support your discussion with evidence from your research. **L2** What implications can you draw?
- *Social studies teaching task:* After researching articles and political documents on government lobbyists, write a report that defines and explains who and what lobbyists are and the role they play in our political system. Support your discussion with evidence from your research. **L2** What implications can you draw?
- *Science teaching task:* After researching scientific articles on magnetism, write a report that defines and explains “magnetism” and its role in the planetary system. Support your discussion with evidence from your research. **L2** What implications can you draw?

What are “classroom assessment tasks”?

Classroom assessment tasks are a shortened “testing” version of the teaching task that should fit within 1-2 class periods. The purpose of this type of task is to test the extent to which students can perform the identified reading and writing skills without instruction from the teacher. To ensure alignment in instruction and student experience, practitioners use the same template to create a classroom assessment task as they use to create a specific teaching task. This type task can be used as pre-test and/or post-test.

How is the prototype collection organized?

The LDC prototype set of template tasks is organized around writing types and text structures, related to both the critical thinking demands and the interdependence of reading and writing outlined in the CCSS.

Writing types. Fundamentally, the core standards for writing require students to exhibit critical thinking related to three overarching writing approaches: 1) *argumentation- to make arguments*, 2) *informational/explanatory-to inform or explain*, and 3) *narrative-to narrate*.

Text structures. Within these three critical thinking areas – argumentation, informational or explanatory and narrative – the template tasks address a second layer of cognitive demands outlined in the CCSS: text structures (also called “modes of discourse”). Specifically, the following text structures define each prompt and are embedded in both what a student reads and the types of writing they do:

- **Definition:** explaining the explicit and implicit meanings of a concept, topic, or idea
- **Description:** providing details that illustrate a character, place, or event
- **Procedural-Sequential:** relating chronological or sequential events in some order
- **Synthesis:** summarizing; integrating important elements of an idea, concept, or topic
- **Analysis:** examining by breaking down the elements of an idea, topic, concept, issue, or theme
- **Comparison:** contrasting similarities and differences
- **Evaluation:** providing a point of view based on a set of principles or criteria; critiquing; recommending
- **Problem/Solution:** examining a problem and proposing a solution(s)
- **Cause/Effect:** identifying a cause for an event or condition and examining the effect(s)

The chart below shows how text structure and writing type intersect and rely on each other. Within each intersection, the chart suggests applicability to ELA, social studies, and/or science.

	Argumentation	Informational or Explanatory	Narrative
Definition	N/A	ELA, social studies, science	NA
Description	N/A	ELA, social studies, science	ELA, social studies
Procedural-Sequential	N/A	social studies, science	ELA, social studies
Synthesis	N/A	ELA, social studies, Science	N/A
Analysis	ELA, social studies, science	ELA, social studies, science	N/A
Comparison	ELA, social studies, science	ELA, social studies, science	N/A
Evaluation	ELA, social studies, science	N/A	N/A
Problem/Solution	social studies, science	N/A	N/A
Cause/Effect	social studies, science	Science, social studies	N/A

What types of reading texts, writing products and content go in the blanks on each template prompt?

That decision is in the hands of practitioners developing the task, with supports such as Appendix B of the CCSS helping them make aligned choices. The templates allow practitioners to insert the texts (types, level), writing products, and content they want students to be taught. The following explanation expands on the choices they can make, using reading and writing selections derived from the common core standards. The content chart, in particular, is just the beginning. It will become richer as others work with the LDC system and weigh in with their ideas and as assessment consortia specifications emerge.

- I. **Reading text types/genre.** The following charts lay out potential text types (or genre) that can be inserted into template prompts. There are two main categories:

Literature	
Fiction	Or substitute: adventure stories, historical fiction, mysteries, fantasy, science fiction, realistic fiction, allegories, parodies, satire, graphic novels
Drama	Or substitute: One-act and multiple-act plays (both in written form and in film)
Poetry	Or substitute: narrative poems, lyrical poems, free verse poems, sonnets, odes, ballads, epics
Folk literature	Or substitute: myths, fables, fairy tales, legends, folktales, tall tales
Informational Texts	
Non-fiction	Or substitute: Textbooks/academic texts/ articles; journal/ newspaper/magazine articles; scientific/ historical sources; primary source documents; guides/manuals; scientific/ technical/business articles/documents; political articles/documents; speeches
Narrative	Or substitute: accounts, opinions, interviews/memoirs, biographies, speeches
Reference books	Or substitute: encyclopedias, dictionaries, thesauruses, atlases, almanacs, guides, how-to books
Other	Video, digital text, graphical information (e.g. pictures, videos, maps, time lines), simulations

2. **Written products.** The following written products are considered essential for college readiness by the common core standards. These products ask students to argue a position, inform or explain, or narrate.

Essay	Or substitute: review, article, editorial, speech, proposal
Report	Or substitute: article, lab report, manual
Narrative	Or substitute: article, account, biography, play/script

3. **Content.** The template includes space for content that cuts across reading, analysis, and writing experiences using content expectations established by state, district and school policies and practices, as well as content knowledge experienced practitioners consider important. Content includes topics, issues, themes, and concepts—the body of knowledge involved in a discipline—that students are expected to learn during a course of study.

Topic	<i>Such as:</i> the westward movement of the 1800s
Issue	<i>Such as:</i> the impact of the westward movement on Native Americans
Theme	<i>Such as:</i> “rugged individualism” as an uniquely American theme in folklore
Concept	<i>Such as:</i> “manifest destiny”

How can the rigor levels of tasks be varied?

By changing choices (as described below), practitioners can adjust the rigor level in four major ways:

1. **By selecting the level of difficulty within a template task.** LDC template tasks include levels that allow practitioners to vary the type of demands of students to manage and complete the task. Individual tasks can be made simple or complex by varying the task demand, with up to three tiers of possibilities:
 - Level 1 [L1] refers to the most fundamental “level of difficulty” and narrows the task to those skills in reading, writing and critical thinking that are essential for the task. Often more than one version of L1 is given to allow for choice.
 - Level 2 [L2] refers to a “next-step-up” skill or cognitive demand such as managing more than one point of view or multiple processes.
 - Level 3 [L3] adds additional demand to the task in which student writers are asked to make connections and use background knowledge to reflect implications beyond the specific topic.

Some tasks have only one level. Others have two or three levels. For leveled tasks, teachers can choose to teach Level 1 (L1) alone or add demands to the prompt by including Level 2 (L2) and/or Level 3 (L3).

2. **By choice of reading materials.** The rigor level of a task also can be adjusted by varying text type and complexity, as well as by the number and length of texts students are asked to read. Reading demands are tethered to difficulty levels that are being established by the CCSS through its text complexity specifications. Currently, common core exemplars and systems such as Lexile scores set the demand levels.
3. **By type of writing demand.** Demand levels for academic writing will be established as common core exemplars are produced and assessment systems are developed. The type of writing demand can be varied as part of a larger instructional strategy that includes scaffolding and student engagement.
4. **By content difficulty.** The selection of the level of content difficulty is based on state and local expectations, as well as on the practitioner's knowledge of the field.

This unique “plug-and-play” feature of the template task is designed to give practitioners a high degree of control and choice while sustaining a coherent alignment to the CCSS. This system also gives practitioners flexibility to scaffold instruction to fit learning progressions as well as meet the needs of individual students in the development of their reading and writing skills.

What about reading?

There is an emerging national conversation that bears mentioning here, with more to come as the thinking crystallizes. This conversation focuses on the kinds of work students need to do to successfully meet the common core standards in reading. There seem to be two ways practitioners can build out template tasks in relation to reading requirements:

1. **Making tasks totally “text dependent”**- A text-dependent task is defined as a task that can be answered *exclusively* by reference to the text or texts. Such a task asks students to establish what follows and what does not follow directly from the text or texts. A text-dependent task requires no information or evidence from other sources. Reading closely often requires students to actively think about, deconstruct, organize and/or integrate the ideas about the content covered in the text or texts.
2. **Adding a requirement for “synthesizing sources and knowledge”**- A synthesizing sources task requires students to read texts in order to establish what follows or does not follow directly from them, as in text-dependent reading (above). This type of task also asks students to connect what they learned to a larger body of sources and content knowledge. A good example of this requirement is L3 in the prototype template task collection.

David Coleman and Sue Pimentel describe the reading goals for both types like this: “The goal here is precision and attentiveness to exactly what is said and not said. The aim is to cultivate a very close attention to the details and broader moves of a text. You might call it *reading like a detective*.”

How are LDC teaching tasks scored?

The Foundation is extending the LDC partnership to include expert scoring partners who will take the lead on designing the scoring system, developing training processes and materials, and working with LDC partners to score with consistency across sites. This section is a placeholder for partners to use in the meantime, and it will be replaced as the scoring partner work emerges.

LDC Rubrics: The LDC rubrics are aligned to the common core standards and address argumentation, informational/explanatory and narrative products. The LDC rubrics are holistic, written to describe demands (“do this”) and qualities (“how well”). LDC colleague Gary McCormick of Kenton County, Kentucky, calls them “purpose-specific” rubrics. The score a student receives is an informed professional interpretation of the skills and qualities described in the rubric based on the grade and curriculum continuum. As data, the LDC score provides feedback on the skills students still need to develop, pointing to the teaching that should follow and the type of learning the student should engage in. A score of “meets expectations” or better tells students that they have demonstrated the qualities of thinking and use of skills to warrant that score for the teaching task. If not, the student receives a “not yet” and works with the teacher to improve the work until it meets expectations.

The Scoring Process: Where possible, student work should be scored by practitioners in pairs or in small groups. Practitioners can refer to the CCSS grade-by-grade standards if they need further description for what is highlighted in the rubric. The process includes:

- Collecting and identifying student work using some notation system that identifies student grade levels and class, but not individual students.
- Scoring in pairs or small groups in which differences in scores are discussed.
- Agreeing on and providing one score. Practitioners might note on the rubric where there are weaknesses and strengths or where students need to work more diligently; the notation would be used to confer with students.
- Collecting scores in a matrix to identify how many scores are at each level. Teams should discuss what the classroom, student groups and individual student data indicate about learning progress and what students need next. Questions to consider:
 - Do students need to repeat the task, with other texts and content?
 - Are they ready to move to a higher Level 2 or 3?
 - Are they ready to move to another type of module? Do they need some interim teaching on specific skills before they engage in another module?
- Select a small number of papers that pose interesting questions for instruction.
- Collect sample papers to serve as exemplars for future scoring.

Practitioners can also add specific content criteria. Ultimately, though, the student receives one score. This sends the message that content and skills work together to demonstrate understanding and adherence to the teaching task.

Making Scoring Matter: Common scoring with rubrics is one of the most powerful activities for building consensus about the meaning of “achievement” for both teachers and students. A score is not an exact measurement, nor is a rubric an exact description of performance, although a good rubric describes as well as words can the most salient skills and qualities relevant to a task. Because scoring is “inexact” even with a high quality rubric, it requires experience and collaboration to arrive at decisions. As practitioners gain more confidence in their scoring, the score gains more and more meaning and accuracy. As a result, scoring provides critical classroom-based data to inform the next steps teachers and students must take to improve literacy skills.

What is a great teaching task?

A great teaching task requires teachers to bring their deep knowledge of content to bear as well as their understanding of what is pedagogically sound literacy practice. Students must put in the effort to do more than “just read” or “just write.” They need to think and apply the language and structures to convey their thinking. It’s prudent for practitioners to do a task themselves before teaching it in order to experience firsthand what students are asked to do and to make any changes on areas that are not clear or explicit. A quality LDC task should:

- Follow the LDC requirements for building a teaching task and use the levels in an intentional way.
- Be strategic in its demands between reading and writing.
- Intentionally moderate the interplay between more or less difficult texts and writing demands to create tasks that build student capacity to manage increasingly difficult tasks.
- Ask questions or poses intellectual challenges that “ratchet up” students’ thinking and literacy practices while making the task doable with instructional supports.
- Engage students in a key idea or content rather than focus on coverage so that students engage deeply in the thinking and literacy practices necessary to manage the demands in the teaching tasks.
- Be specific and accurate in posing content (concept, information, topic, or issue).
- Be relevant to the curriculum, purposeful and clearly related to coursework.
- Be taught and completed by students over a specific time, such as 2-4 weeks.

Tasks created from the template task collection bring the common core standards together in a way that translates them into what students do. But tasks are only the beginning. They must be taught.

LDC Modules

What are “modules”?

LDC modules are the instructional arm of the LDC framework. Modules are classroom-ready plans for teaching literacy and content, based on a teaching task for a specific subject area, grade level, and course. Modules help teachers ensure the reading, writing, and thinking skills students need to complete the task are intentionally taught, along with the content that is so important to each discipline.

Modules offer practitioners a common format and language for capturing, implementing, and sharing complete instructional plans. As described in the section that follows (LDC Units, Module Combinations and Courses), modules are building blocks to be used in context of a larger strategy for designing courses.

LDC partners already have begun to create modules that can be shared. For example, LDC partners from the Elizabethtown School District designed “Study in Motion” for Physical Science in grades 6-8. The module outlines literacy instruction for walking students step-by-step through reading science articles related to speed, acceleration and force, in addition to conducting experiments with lab materials, and then producing a written and illustrated article that outlines the relationships between the concepts. Additional LDC example modules include “The Scientific Method” for grade 8 science and “On Revenge” for grades 9-12 ELA. More modules currently are being developed and tested by district and national partners for sharing over the next few months.

What are “template modules”?

LDC template modules are partially developed modules that give practitioners a leg up on designing instruction to teach their developed teaching task. Template modules have a well-developed instructional strategy that requires minimal work to be classroom-ready. Like template tasks, they are reusable and recyclable. Practitioners are free to create their own personal template modules “from scratch.” Or, they can get a head start by choosing from an expanding collection of “partner-developed template modules,” making adjustments wherever they choose to do so. Like the template task design, the template module provides teachers with support while giving them freedom to make choices.

The LDC Design Team has created prototype template modules for teaching argumentation and informational or explanatory reading, writing, and thinking—no matter which subjects, grade levels or tasks practitioners are teaching. Our prototype provides a classic approach to teaching literacy skills. There are, however, many, many ways to teach reading and writing skills at the secondary level. The prototype is intended to engage others in a larger conversation about literacy instruction so that they, too, began to document and capture their expertise. The LDC module format serves as a platform for sharing teaching expertise across schools, districts and states using a common language.

Eventually, as partners build out their own template modules, teachers will be able to select from a strong, vetted collection. It will represent a wide array of solid instructional strategies and styles that practitioners can use as is or adapt. For example, the National Writing Project is building versions based on their recommended instructional approaches, with a particular focus on writing. The National Paideia Center is developing versions that include Socratic Seminars among other discussion-based strategies. Virtual school partners will have versions that harness the power of technology to track and respond to individual progress. Expert teachers are also creating their own versions that also will be available for sharing.

What is included in the LDC module?

The LDC module has four main sections, with a cover sheet and an appendix. A set of technical specifications that clarifies requirements and choice points follows this overview.

Cover

- A. **Cover sheet:** Creative cover that includes module title and author.
- B. **Information sheet:** Standard information used to code the module when it is put online and shared with others.

Section I-What Task? *What task sets clear, measurable goals for learning?*

A. **Template task:** *What template task will you use?*

Definition: Fill-in-the-blank template task that is the main vehicle for designing literacy instruction.

B. **Standards:** *What standards will be used to build the teaching task?*

Definition: Clusters of common core literacy standards attached to each template task, already pre-identified by LDC partners.

The LDC prototype module template is designed for grades 6-12 with broad applicability across disciplines. It uses the common core anchor standards to support this broad view. As other template task banks are created, they will crystallize expectations by using common core standards specific to grades and content areas.

C. **Teaching task:** *What completed task tells students what to do?*

Definition: The major assignment teachers use to build the module and teach.

The teaching task tells students what to do, establishing the demands that result in a product that can be scored. In addition to the completed template prompt, the teaching task includes an introduction for students to the task and an optional “extension” for applying what they have learned in a variety of ways. The final, critical, part of the teaching task is the rubric to be used by teachers for scoring student work and making instructional decisions based on the scoring.

Section 2-What Skills? *What skills do students need to succeed on the teaching task?*

In order for students to be successful on the teaching task, practitioners must be clear on the reading, writing and other literacy skills students must develop. These skills are identified by “back-mapping” from the requirements of the teaching task. Module developers then cluster these skills into groupings that make sense for teaching them to students. The different lists of skills that will emerge from various LDC partners will support researchers in identifying areas of agreement on essential skills.

A. **Specific skills:** *What skills are essential?*

Definition: “Essential” skills students need to acquire to succeed on the teaching task and classroom assessment task.

Practitioners identify these skills by “back-mapping” from the requirements of the teaching task. The skills form the basis for designing instruction (Section 3 – “What Instruction?”).

B. **Skills defined:** *How are you defining/describing the skills?*

Definition: Skills defined as “the ability to...” so the meaning of each skill a student must have (and a teacher must teach) is clear.

Practitioners ensure that the identified skills relate to the student (not to what the teacher must do – that comes later under “What Instruction?”).

C. **Skills clusters:** *How are the skills clustered?*

Definition: Skills are clustered into groupings that make sense for how they will be taught in the classroom (e.g. reading skills, writing skills, etc.).

Practitioners identify how the skills are related to each other to help frame how they can be taught. The LDC prototype module template provides one example of how this could work

Section 3. What Instruction? *How will you teach students to succeed on the teaching task?*

Section 3 specifies the instructional system used to teach the skills identified in Section 2, and to ultimately succeed on the tasks identified in Section 1. Within the LDC approach, this system is called an “instructional ladder.” The instructional ladder provides a common language for capturing instructional expertise so it can be shared. The LDC Design Team has provided a prototype instructional ladder (Ladder 1)- one approach to outlining the

instruction of reading and writing. The organization and format of the ladder is up to LDC partners, but the ladder must include five specified elements:

A. “Mini-tasks”: *What “mini-tasks” will you give students so they can learn each skill?*

Definition: Short assignments used to teach each essential skill.

As seen in the LDC prototype template modules, each mini-task has a prompt that asks students to produce measurable products, as well as a scoring guide for teachers to gather information and adjust teaching accordingly. The LDC prototype instructional ladder provides examples of the types of mini-tasks teachers could use to engage students in developing the skills necessary to complete a teaching task successfully over several weeks.

B. Instructional strategies/notes: *What instructional strategies will you use to teach each skill?*

Definition: Instructional plan teachers use to teach students the skills they need to succeed on the “short assignments” and the larger teaching task.

This area is about what teacher “do.” This part should explicitly outline the strategies teachers will use to teach specific skills related to the mini-task.

C. Professional development/preparation: *What do you need to do to be prepared to teach the skills/module?*

Definition: Teacher preparation needed for teachers to successfully teach the module.

This area could include a description of the professional skills and knowledge teachers need related to the mini-task, as well as the logistics to set it up for students.

D. Pacing plans: *How will you pace instruction?*

Definition: Estimated amount of time it will take to teach the module, overall and step-by-step.

Pacing planning supports teachers in moving from broader instructional strategies to the more specific day-by-day plans essential for successful implementation.

E. Materials, references, and supports: *What do teachers need to teach? What do students need to learn?*

Definition: Information on the instructional materials, resources and supports necessary for the teaching and learning of reading and writing skills required by the task in this section.

There are two sections: one for teachers, one for students.

Section 4-What Results? *How good is good enough?*

This section prompts the sharing of exemplary student work samples to support scoring rubrics and for calibrating expectations.

A. Student work samples: *What student work samples support the rubric?*

Definition: Examples of student work to represent each performance level on teaching task.

Student work samples are forthcoming as LDC partners test modules, score student products and identify strong examples.

B. Other scoring supports: *What other scoring supports are needed, if any?*

Definition: To be determined as scoring work progresses.

C. Classroom assessment task: *How will you assess what students know and can do when they work independently?*

Definition: A shorter classroom test teachers use to see how well students perform independently.

This task uses the same fill-in-the-blank template as the larger teaching task but is adjusted for the much shorter time frame. The classroom assessment can be used as a pre-test and/or post-test. An adjusted rubric is included.

Teacher Work Section: *What now, what next?* Modules also include a working section for teachers to include notes, comments, variations and feedback to the original module, after teaching it to various students.

- A. **Teacher thoughts.** *What worked and what didn't? After teaching the module, what would you change? What would you change for other students in different classes?*
- B. **Possible variations.** *What ideas do you have for other extensions or spin-offs?*

What is required and what is optional in building a module?

The following chart outlines each required element for a module. This creates the consistency necessary for others to use the module and compare tasks, as well as for researchers to study the LDC design. The chart also indicates the choices for practitioners when they build a module and what is fixed and what is flexible.

LDC MODULE REQUIREMENTS AND OPTIONS		
Section	What is required?	What can be changed or added?
BEGINNING INFORMATION		
Cover sheet	Include a title and author(s) (you and your team members) of the module	Include any additional information or art work as you want.
Information sheet	Fill in all sections of the standard information sheet.	Even though you are asked to use the standard information sheet now, changes to it are still being considered. If you think something key is omitted, please let us know.
SECTION I. WHAT TASK?		
A. Template task	Select and copy the template task exactly as it is worded in the LDC Template Task Collection.	Nothing can be changed or added.
B. Standards	Keep the exact CCR Anchor Standards listed in the blank module because the alignment is already completed. Add appropriate state content standards . Provide source information for the standards you use.	You may also want to indicate some grade-specific standards from the CCSS.
C. Teaching task	Use the exact wording of your selected template task from the LDC Collection , except that you can leave out L2 and L3 versions if you choose. Fill in the template task blanks following the guidance given in the template task collection document. Use the exact rubric listed in the blank module.	You choose which texts students will read, the content they will study, and the writing product they will do. In choosing, consider requirements set by your state, district, or school. You decide whether to include the L2 and L3 portions of the template and whether to include extension sections.

Section	What is required?	What can be changed or added?
SECTION II. WHAT SKILLS?		
A. Specific skills	List the skills students need to succeed on the teaching task.	You can create your own list of skills by back-mapping from the template task, or you can use or adapt the LDC prototype skills chart.
B. Skills defined	Define each skill listed using the stem “the ability to...”	You choose the definitions.
C. Skills clusters	Cluster the skills in groupings that make sense and are in a workable order for teaching.	You decide the groupings.
SECTION III. WHAT INSTRUCTION?		
Overall	Organize instruction around the skills identified and defined in Section 2, addressing each of the elements (A, B, C, D, and E below) for each skill.	You choose how to organize and format your instructional ladder (or use a format set by your state, district, or school) as long as it includes the required elements below. Examples are provided that can be adopted/adapted.
A. “Mini-tasks”	<p>Mini-tasks must be included. In each “mini-task” include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A prompt asking students to demonstrate an “in-progress” skill or practice. • A product description specifying student work that can be evaluated for success on the skill being taught, and used as a formative source of data. • A simple scoring guide stating what students will be expected to show as evidence of learning. 	<p>You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the LDC Design Team’s optional prototypes. • Adapt those prototypes. • Use versions developed by your state, district or school. • Develop your own.
B. Instructional strategies/ instructional notes?	Specify instructional strategies to be used in teaching students to succeed on each mini-task.	<p>You can decide what instructional strategies to use, within any requirements set by your state, district or school. You can also use or adapt the LDC Design Team’s optional prototype.</p> <p>The instructional notes space lets teachers add comments before or after using the module</p>
C. PD/ preparation	List PD/training needs and preparation for teaching.	You decide what those needs are.
D. Pacing plans	Estimate time requirements.	You decide what time is required for each step.
E. Materials, references, and supports	<p>In the <i>teacher</i> section, list materials, references and supports for teachers; include citations and sources</p> <p>In the <i>student</i> section, list materials, references, and supports for students. Again, include citations and sources.</p>	You decide what items will be needed or helpful.

Section	What is required?	What can be changed or added?
SECTION IV. WHAT RESULTS?		
A. Student work samples	<p><i>Teaching task.</i> Include at least (number TBD) examples of student work to represent each performance level on the Teaching Task rubric.</p> <p><i>Classroom assessment.</i> If used as a post-test, include at least (number TBD) examples of student work to represent each performance level on the rubric.</p>	You choose the work samples.
B. Other scoring supports	No current requirements: information may be added here as scoring work progresses.	
C. Classroom assessment task	Include a classroom assessment task, using <u>the same template as you used for the teaching task</u> to create a shorter (1-2 days) un-coached assessment. (This task will be optional for the teachers using the module, but as the module builder, you are required to create and include it.)	<p>You can use the “plug and play” aspects of the template task – the text, writing requirements and content –to accommodate the shorter time period.</p> <p>While each module is required to have a classroom assessment task that correlates with the teaching task (to be used as either a pre or post test), the teacher using the module will decide when—and if—it is appropriate to use the classroom assessment. (Example: if students are still struggling to succeed on the teaching task, that may be all the information needed to make a “what next” decision, and the teacher might decide to teach the task in a second module before assessing students.)</p>
TEACHER WORK SECTION		
Section	What is required?	What can be changed or added?
A. Teacher thoughts	<p>Address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked and what didn’t • What you would change if using the module again • Evaluation information. 	This is a working section for teachers and is very open. The online community will add additional opportunity for comments.
B. Possible variations	No requirements.	This is an additional working section inviting teachers to suggest other alternatives for using the module. For example, after using the module, a teacher may see possibilities for using it with other texts, other content, and so on.

How do you know a great module when you write one?

An LDC module is made up of a series of short assignments identifying literacy practices that lead students toward completion of a teaching task. A great module identifies the most important steps in that process so that students move through the reading and writing short assignments without becoming overwhelmed or underprepared to complete the teaching task.

A great module:

- Follows the LDC requirements for building a module and presents a manageable set of short assignments that identifies important literacy practices in reading, writing, and critical thinking.
- Creates instructional opportunities so that students go deeply into aspects of the teaching task that support their efforts to “meet expectations” or better on the teaching task rubric.
- Is strategic in its demands, asking students to engage in literacy practices that ensure they are addressing the teaching task prompt and are on target toward completion of the teaching task.
- Provides timely feedback to students using a two-point scoring guide for each short assignment so that students can move on with confidence or correct any problems. If applicable, provides helpful feedback on pre- and post-classroom assessments that allow students to see their growth and understand where they need to continue to develop skills.
- Is paced to be completed over two to four weeks for a stand-alone module, longer for a module extended into a unit.
- Sets up opportunities for professional communities to share expertise; build consensus on the meaning of teaching tasks, rubrics, and scoring; and improve skills in teaching literacy practices.

LDC Units, Module Combinations and Courses

The LDC module presents a variety of design opportunities for building a system that ensures students receive instruction in reading and writing over time. LDC suggests three categories for thinking about using modules:

1. Units: Embed the module within a content unit.

A common artifact of a curriculum map is the “unit,” a period of instruction that focuses on specific content and involves students in activities, assignments and sometimes assessments. Because units often introduce students to new knowledge and skills, units require substantial teaching about the topic, issue, or theme to enable students to acquire understanding. Teachers, individually or as a group, can insert a module at a point in a unit when they decide students are prepared enough to examine in depth its critical elements— a question, an issue, a topic. The module is inserted to further engage students in the content and its complexities through the teaching of reading and writing about it. If teachers wish, they can give students a classroom assessment at the end of the unit that parallels the teaching task in the module.

2. Module Combinations: Combine modules strategically and sequentially.

Modules should not be designed or taught as a “one shot” deal but should be connected, or “linked,” to spiral the reading and writing skills to be taught across time. This can be done in multiple ways:

- *Sequence modules within content areas.*
By sequencing a type of module over a term or semester with different topics and reading materials within a discipline or course, students have multiple opportunities to learn. For example, social studies teachers might teach two argumentation modules during the first semester, using either the same template task or different ones. They could design the two so that the level of difficulty (whether text complexity, product or content) increases for the second module while also scaffolding instruction based on data from student mini-tasks and the final product from the first module. Social studies teachers could mirror this approach to sequencing modules in the second semester by then using informational or explanatory modules.
- *Sequence modules across content areas.*
By sequencing a type of module horizontally over content areas, students not only get multiple opportunities to hone their reading and writing skills, they also apply those skills in pursuit of knowledge in different contexts. For example, a social studies teacher might teach an argumentation module the first term while an English teacher teaches the same type the second term. To create even more variety, you might include some of the elective areas, such as music or sports. This approach forces distribution of responsibility for teaching reading and writing across the school, one of the principles in the common core standards. And, it creates a common focus and approach across content areas that sets expectations for student learning, provides feedback on student learning for teachers with the same students and allows for the sharing of instructional strategies.
- *Teach common modules across grade(s), school(s), district(s), state(s).*
LDC modules also can be orchestrated vertically across grades to create coherence for students in their learning of reading and writing skills over much longer periods of time – say 9-12 grades or even 6-12 grades. Or, even further, modules can be taught across schools or districts – maybe even states. In this approach, when teachers share the challenge of teaching a module, they share expertise and build capacity. They score together and in the process build consensus about the expectations they are setting, how the rubrics reflect those expectations and what students should be expected to do at a grade level and over multiple grade levels no matter their school, district or state. The module, in essence, transforms the common core standards into practice that is meaningful and thoughtful.

3. Courses: Design literacy-saturated courses.

The LDC course-taking design seeks a highly consistent overall curriculum experience in reading and writing, one in which both students and teachers are learners in their own ways. It seeks to ensure that a wide range of formative data and feedback on student literacy development gathered over time will inform not only instructional choices but also school and district policies and resources. Strategies include:

- *Content-area courses.* The most powerful way to ensure that students receive rigorous instruction in the common core reading and writing standards is to design a literacy-saturated ELA, social studies or science course. This course is based on a systematic distribution of modules for a subject area at a grade level. The sequencing design might include: 1) sequencing modules by topic or chronology depending on the subject, and 2) sequencing modules by rigor level of the LDC selected tasks, such as taking students from L1 to L3 using the same task template or by moving from simpler to more complex texts.
- *Literacy courses.* In addition to designing courses within content areas, partners may choose other types of LDC courses. For example, designers might choose to create a literacy course separate from ELA consisting of modules sequenced by type and skill sets, much in the way colleges design English composition courses for first year students. In this design, literature could continue to be taught as a discipline while the Literacy Course teaches reading and writing skills that support learning in all subject areas.
- *Integrated courses.* There are many different ways to integrate courses. For example, a team of teachers might design and teach a Humanities course—involving history, philosophy, science, literature, and the arts—that uses the LDC template tasks to integrate the content from different disciplines while teaching reading and writing skills. Depending on the requirements related to “seat time” and flexibility that allows creative scheduling, students could receive both English and social studies credit by taking the Humanities course.
- *Sequenced courses.* Designing modules to create the “big picture” involves placing modules over several years within a course sequence. In this way, a middle school, for example, can ensure that over three years all students receive intentional instruction in reading and writing and master those skills over time. This approach requires careful planning and collaboration but offers the most powerful way to develop and “ground” literacy practices not only in students’ repertoire but also in teachers’ range of instructional skills.

Ultimately, this list is expected to expand and provide further examples as LDC partners learn and share what they are creating.

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